

Dinner for Mildred Andrews  
April 21, 1976

Mr. Braught, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am, of course, most pleased to have a part in this affair. Mildred Andrews has been one of my favorite people for many years.

I think I first became seriously aware of Mildred back in 1948, when a rumor reached the president's office that she was making semi-weekly visits to Chicago. Why in the world would she be making a train trip to Chicago twice a week? You must remember that those were the days when the president's office paid more attention to the behavior of the faculty than President Sharp is able to do now.

It seemed at the time that the only plausible reason for her Chicago trips would be "romance." Only a love affair could explain such a profligate expenditure of energy.

This explanation seemed to be confirmed a few days later when we learned that she was travelling to Chicago to see a Marcel Dupré. The musical literacy of the president's office was not high at that time, but while we were wondering what this Frenchman had that could not be found in Norman, someone came up with the information that Dupré was one of the world's great organists. Mildred was commuting to Chicago twice weekly to take lessons from a master. She continued this for two months, a most exhausting schedule, but she would not settle for less than the best possible preparation to teach her students.

But, of course, all of this really did involve a love affair -- a love affair with music, and the teaching of music, which led

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Mildred to preeminence in her field -- a master in her own right; one of the world's fine organists and certainly the country's premier teacher of the organ -- the most dedicated teacher I have known.

A letter Bill Nugent wrote to Russell Mathis describes her dedication very well:

"During my first few months at the University of Oklahoma, we experienced a rather severe ice storm. So severe, in fact, that all university classes were abandoned and virtually everyone, even the secretaries judiciously stayed home. As I sat alone in the small, dingy, dark cubbyhole on the second floor of Holmberg that was the Director's office, and that was so hidden away that even the Muses hadn't discovered it, I would look up at the string hanging down from the single dim light, then at its dull shadows, then out through the small window at the gray sky and the blanket of ice where no one moved, and finally back in side to the unpainted concrete where silence in a music building was even more disturbing. There seemed to be so much work that ought to be done if the fine folks in Norman were to have the School of Music they had already earned. At the same time, I could not help wondering if I should have stayed in Kansas. Suddenly, however, the silence was broken. Mildred Andrews Boggess, wearing a new pair of bright red curling shoes, and dressed in her usual dignified but impeccable bon genre, ceremoniously burst through the door, routinely reaching for her mail, and said, "Never fear, Admirable Byrd is here!" She had, indeed, walked over the ice, the entire distance from her home and would faithfully render to her devoted students, all lessons scheduled for the day.

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"As I have already said, that occasion was to be symbolic. I was to see the instance repeated many times, even on the very day she was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, when she skipped parts of the ceremonies to give lessons. During the absolutely delightful three years Dorothy and I spent in Norman, I was to continuously seek from and find in Mildred Andrews Boggess a consistent fountain of strength and wisdom which I always sought when in quest of goals for the School of Music and which I always cherished. Whether we worked for new doctoral programs, restoration of recital requirements, new pipe organs, curricular revisions, refurbishing physical facilities, fund raising for endowment, improving the faculty, or a myriad of other aims, Mildred Andrews Boggess was always there, in the forefront leading the charge to surround the wagons.

"Maybe Robert Frost had her in mind when he wrote about one who, thought she knew and fully appreciated the loveliness, darkness and depth of the snowy woods, she always had promises to keep and miles to go before she could sleep. In an article about her, I wrote: 'In a state where traditions include pride in winning football teams, a writer recently called Mildred Andrews "The Winningness Coach of the Console." Master artist! Master teacher! Those who know her well are quick to add, master person, Oklahoma's first lady of the organ.'

"On this special evening, Dorothy and I send our warmest affection to both Mildred and Rough. I thank all of you again for permitting me to join in recognizing Mildred Andrews Boggess. There will never be another like her."

Now, after nearly three decades have passed in what seems a flash, Mildred is retiring from the faculty of the University of Oklahoma. We are here this evening to show our appreciation

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of what she has meant to the institution and to us, professionally and personally. As a part of all of this, a group of letters has been assembled from her friends and well wishers -- letters which will be presented to her later in bound form. It has been my pleasure to see some of these letters. Included in the list of writers are the names of George Nigh, David L. Boren, Carl Albert, Glen English, John Jarmon, James Jones, Tom Steed, Patience Latting, William S. Morgan, Ted Risenhoover, Dewey Bartlett, Nelson Rockefeller and Gerald Ford.

One letter, which attracted my attention, read in part ...

"We are all so very proud to have known and watched you through the years as you grew, from a little girl in junior high school playing the piano so amazingly well at senior high events, to your great stature in the music world today.

"You have been a source of much pride to all your communities -- to the university, to Norman, to the church -- to all of your friends and acquaintances -- from the children to the quavery old -- and we thank you.

"We all love you, you know, and wish you continued fulfillment, happiness and health."

Mr. and Mrs. Harold R. Belknap  
and his children, Kay and Hal.

It would seem that the Belknaps have stated very well how we feel about our honored guest of the evening. But, now, before proceeding with our program, I would like to read from another letter which is especially appealing.

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"Mrs. Boggess,

"While I was in High School being recruited, I considered O.U. for two reasons. (1) Academic excellence. (2) athletic programs. To me it is people like yourself that make O.U. the school it is today. Thanks for the years of service given and may God Bless You.

Dewey Selmon

O.U. Sooners.

This seems an appropriate time to turn things over to Jerry Smith, current director of the School of Music, who will make some presentations.

There is a very old saying that back of every great woman is a man. As you know, Rough Boggess was back of Mildred Andrews for a number of years before their relationship was finally formalized, clarified, or legalized -- I have trouble finding the right word. Most of us watched their romance with great interest. It seemed at times that little, if any, progress was being made. But we all knew that Rough was doing his best -- all that can be asked of any man, or woman.

Mildred and Rough lived one house apart, only a short distance from the Cross residence on Mockingbird Lane. Cleo and I were able to keep pretty good track of what was going on.

One evening, the fall of 1973, we received a phone call from Mildred and Rough about 10:15 in the evening. They asked if they could come over and discuss a matter with us. We agreed promptly but we wondered what in the world had happened. What kind of

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argument could they be having that would need to be moderated at that time of night? Cleo had just finished washing her hair and had been under the dryer, but she wrapped a scarf around her head "turban fashion" and we awaited their arrival with anxious expectancy. To our very great relief, and equally great surprise, they merely wanted to ask if they could be married in our home later, around Thanksgiving time. I hope we were able to collect our wits sufficiently to respond adequately to the great honor we were being proffered but, in any event we said yes.

During the days that followed, we often wondered if the wedding would actually happen. Only when we saw Mildred's organ being moved to Rough's house, were we sure they really "meant business" and the wedding came off as planned in the living room at 812 Mockingbird Lane. It was a most happy occasion for all -- especially Mildred and Rough. They were so pleased with what had happened that they were relatively undismayed by the fact that their house was robbed while they were at dinner following the wedding reception.

Some of you may not know Rough as you know Mildred, but I can assure you that he is a splendid person -- well qualified to back Mildred Andrews. After completing a fine career in military service, he was employed by the office of Admissions and Records at the University of Oklahoma until his retirement a short time ago. I am happy to present Rough Boggess for a few words, the man behind our legendary guest of the evening.

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Now I want to give Mildred a chance to tell what she thinks of all of this.

This has been a most auspicious occasion. You, and thousands not here, would want to join me in expressing warm appreciation and affection for Mildred Andrews, and wishing for her complete fulfillment during her retirement years doing exactly what she wants to do.

It seems appropriate to close this occasion by reading the following letter:

"Dear Mildred:

It is hard to imagine you retiring from OU. It is like hearing of St. Cecilia herself climbing down off that organ bench and packing away her pedal slippers. I can almost hear the yet unborn babes crying out that they won't have the chance to study with Mildred Andrews. And what will poor Senator Fulbright do about his scholarships in the future?

On the other hand, it is splendid that you can knock it off and enjoy new pursuits. That is what I would like to do myself, and I am no more of a chicken than you. But I would starve to death.

It is wonderful what you have done already in this world-- for the School of Music, for the AGO, for Oklahoma, for countless students (can you remember even the names of all that number? Yes, I expect so, with your memory, but it must be a staggering list--all glistening with stars too).

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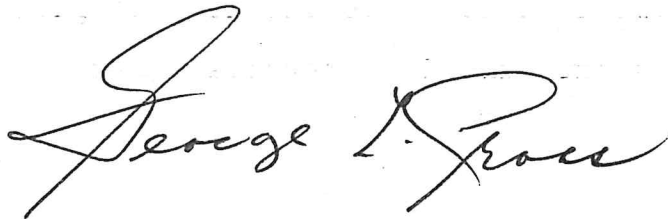
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"Now take the opportunity and use some of your new time and old energy (old meaning what you have always had) for yourself. Do not let other people grab the advantage of it, which they are sure to try to do. Be staunch, selfish, reckless, footloose and happy. You will be a legend whatever you do.

With admiration and love,

Carlos Moseley, President  
The Philharmonic Symphonic Society  
of New York, Inc.

As far as I know, ladies and gentlemen, that concludes the program for the evening. Thanks for the privilege of being here with you!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "George L. Gross". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the page.



**M**ASTER ARTIST! MASTER TEACHER! Phrases that were used during the testimonial dinner on November 16, 1971, during which David Hall, governor of the State of Oklahoma, presented to Mildred Andrews, internationally renowned organist-teacher, the state's medal and certificate, thereby inducting her into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame. For Mildred Andrews, David Ross Boyd professor of music at the University of Oklahoma, who has produced an astounding eleven Fulbright recipients, this latest honor only serves to further reflect the pride that the entire state of Oklahoma holds for this remarkable woman. Indeed, rarely has a state displayed greater affection for one of its native citizens, and in this case, genuinely earned for excellence in teaching. To this always alert, poised, dignified, attractive lady with the remarkable diagnostic insights, unsolicited honors and awards too numerous to list completely in this writing have come. They include: outstanding woman faculty member (1948); one of ten outstanding professors at the University of Oklahoma (based on excellence of teaching and counseling—1953); listed in *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in American Education*, *Who's Who in the Southwest*, *Who's Who in American Women*; awarded the distinguished professorship, David Ross Boyd Professor of Music, the highest honor awarded by the Board of Regents at the University of Oklahoma (1964); distinguished service citation, University of Oklahoma (1967) (the university's equivalent to an honorary doctorate); elected to Phi Beta Kappa (1969); diploma for distinguished achievement in the *Two Thousand Women of Achievement* (1969); national professional Panhellenic's outstanding career achievement award (1969); Oklahoma Hall of Fame (1971); national director of Guild student groups, American Guild of Organists.

Marcus Aurelius may well have described the teaching of Mildred Andrews when he said, "Remember this,—that there is a proper dignity and proportion to be observed in the performance of every act. Look to the essence of a thing, whether it be a point of doctrine, of practice, or of interpretation." Her undisguised directness with a deep sense of purpose, and her ability to communicate are rare indeed. If the accomplishments of her students are an honest measure of her success as a teacher, then the record speaks clearly: eleven students have won Fulbright awards for study in England,



## OKLAHOMA'S Mildred Andrews

France, Holland, and Germany; eleven have won first prize in national competitions; international prizes in Prague and Munich; Boston Symphony and Philadelphia Orchestra Young Artists' awards; more than twenty hold professional positions in major colleges and universities throughout the United States; graduates hold organist positions in churches ranging from St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York to churches in France, Italy, and other locations in Europe.

Appropriately, Andrews has stated that "I would rather receive an award for teaching than anything else. The personal goals of people are, of course, many. For me, my goal has always been to be the very best *teacher* that my intellect and musical abilities would permit." With an obvious abundance

of both, Andrews, a native of Hominy, Oklahoma, has wanted to teach since she was in the second grade, and actually began teaching pupils while she was still in junior high school. A 1937 graduate of the University of Oklahoma, she later received the master of music degree from the University of Michigan and has done further study at Union Theological Seminary. Her teachers have included Arthur Poister, David McK. Williams, Palmer Christian, Carl Weinrich, and Marcel Dupré. In fact, it was Marcel Dupré who, in 1939, urged Andrews, by now a successful recitalist, to curtail her teaching in favor of a concert career under a widely successful management. Fortunately for her many devoted students, she chose teaching, and has remained at her alma mater for more than 30 years. "I thank God every night for the honor and privilege of having some part in the musical training of these talented students," she says. To this writer, it is hard to imagine a teacher exerting more profoundly positive influences on the lives of her students. The remarkable devotion, respect, and affection that students hold for her is manifested in their ocular fraternal spirit, pride, and even their social behavior. Although her uncompromising demands for perfection are ever apparent, students are also equally aware of the sincere and total interest that Professor Andrews has in each of them.

In a state whose traditions include pride in winning football teams, a writer recently called Mildred Andrews "The Winningest Coach of the Console." Master Artist! Master Teacher! To which those who know her well are quick to add, "Master Person, Oklahoma's First Lady of the Organ."

B. A. NUGENT



Miss Andrews is shown with the Honorable Tom Steed, Congressman from Oklahoma.

# Retirement meal marks 'end of an era' at OU

By JOHN DWYER

Mildred Andrews Boggess' retirement dinner at 6:30 p.m. Sunday in the Ming Room of the Oklahoma Memorial Union will mark the end of an era at OU.

Since June, 1938, Boggess, professor of music, has worked devotedly toward making the music school at OU one of the best of its kind in the nation.

Born and raised in Hominy, Boggess graduated from OU in 1937. After graduation, she attended the University of Michigan, where she earned her masters' degree.

Later, she did post-graduate study at the University of Chicago under the famous French organist Marcel Dupre. She also attended the Julliard School of Music in New York.

Boggess began teaching at OU

when she was 21. During her stay, she became the university's first full-time organ teacher, and had a major hand in transforming the School of Music from its embryonic stage to a school that in some years has produced more students with Fulbright scholarships and foreign grants than any other university in the country.

Students from the OU School of Music have received grants to music schools and universities in France, Austria, Germany, Denmark, Holland and England.

But Boggess insists she has learned more than the students she has been educating for nearly 40 years. "The greatest reward in any learning career is producing other people, and I've had so many students that have been able to go way beyond what I have done," she said.

Retirement does not mean the time to settle down has come. Her marriage two and a half years ago has added extra fulfillment to her life and enabled her to tackle household chores which she "thoroughly enjoys."

In addition, Boggess plans to keep busy with workshops at other universities and practicing and performing concerts on her own.

"The time had come, I felt, for a younger teacher," Boggess said. "I felt the students could profit more from someone who had experienced things I didn't have the opportunity to.

"I've had many opportunities to go elsewhere, but I've always felt the greatest talent in the country was right here in the Midwest. Why leave when the greenest fields are right here?"

# Mildred Boggess honored

Former students of Mildred Andrews Boggess, internationally known Oklahoma organist, honored the OU professor Saturday and Sunday with special events held at Oklahoma City's Skirvin Plaza. Mrs. Boggess will retire at the end of this semester.

Sixty-six former students from 20 states (besides Oklahoma) gathered for a Saturday evening reception and appreciation dinner in the Ven-

tian Room of the Skirvin Plaza.

Represented were New York, Connecticut, Ohio, Minnesota, North Carolina, Florida, California, Iowa, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Missouri, Michigan, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Texas (with 11), New Mexico, Arizona, Indiana and Oklahoma.

The earliest graduate was from the 1945 class. Seven of Mrs. Boggess' 11 Fulbright scholars attended, four national

competition winners, an international competition winner, seven regional winners, four weddings (for which she had played), four doctorates, 17 college and university teachers, 38 church organists.

On Sunday morning, she was honored by a special Mass at St. John's Episcopal followed by a brunch in the main dining room of the Skirvin Plaza.

The former students presented Mrs. Boggess with two George Sutton prints and an Indian necklace.

Charles Benbow of OU served as master of ceremonies for the events.





Former University of Oklahoma President George L. Cross and Mildred Andrews Boggess, internationally known organ instructor, chat at the salad bar during a

Sunday retirement dinner at OU honoring Boggess for her 38 years of teaching at the university. (Transcript Photo by Janice Higgins)